

November 16, 1967

Hon. Gaylord Nelson
United States Senate
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Gaylord:

Your letter of October 19 was waiting for me upon my return from the one extensive trip - to Israel - that I have made this year. I was very glad to see it and hasten to reply.

My remarks about "muckraking" were, I must admit, somewhat intemperate especially in the light of the added bias given by the newspapers as you mention. I am happy to note the scope of your own perception of the problem and I believe that your committee can do an extraordinarily valuable service by pointing to the need for constructive changes in our system of drug development.

You asked me about the value of a drug compendium. This would indeed be an extremely valuable system for drug information. In principle, I would give it the highest possible endorsement.

One should, however, not underestimate the magnitude of such an undertaking since it would represent very nearly a distillation of recent and contemporary medical research. Many of the assertions that should appear in entries in the compendium would be controversial. There is sufficient division of interest and adversary quality that one would, in all fairness, have to make provision for the registration of conflicting opinions. I do not, however, believe that these objections are insurmountable and I would strongly urge a definitional study of such a project as soon as possible.

Such compendium would have the obvious purpose of displacing the inexpressibly bad system of drug advertising that now prevails. As the compendium develops I foresee that we might move towards a situation where drugs would not be permitted to advertise in any other way. In my opinion, this shift of emphasis from promotional to informational activity on the part of the drug industry would have the most constructive effects in many other problem areas that affect the

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industry in its relation to public interest at the present time.

The tragedy is that the physicians have not developed their own professional organization to deal with this problem. Even now there would be obvious merit in delegating as much responsibility as possible to professional, non-government agencies for the implementation of these educational programs.

With all best wishes.

Sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg,
Professor of Genetics

JL/gem